

# WILLOUGHBY HISTORY CHATTERS

APRIL 2010

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## WHERE TO FROM HERE? GETTING OUR FORWARD STRATEGY RIGHT

The WDHS was founded in 1974. Initially activities focused on historical research and a number of documents on this research were published.

The bequest of the house, *Boronia*, by the late Sonya Kirkham provided us with a base for the development of a museum to interpret the history of Willoughby. It opened in 1993 and has since grown to become the society's dominant activity.

Like those of most local history groups, our museum developed in an *ad hoc* manner and its purpose and relationship with the society have not been clearly defined. Accordingly, we participated in the NSW Museums & Galleries Standards Program during 2009.

As part of this program, participants assessed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the society over the coming years. Our **strengths** were seen to be the ownership of the museum building in a convenient location, a core of dedicated volunteers, a significant collection of historical items and our partnership with Willoughby City Council.

Key **weaknesses** related to our human resource base, namely the lack of volunteers to maintain effective systems and an ageing membership; poor filing and management systems; the lack of a collection policy; a backlog

of acquisitioning and updating of collection data; and the restricted opening times of the museum. The lack of storage space and restricted display opportunities within the existing building were not listed, but are dominant issues today.

**Opportunities** listed by the group included building partnerships with other organisations; promoting the society through the media, a website and presentations to other groups; and publishing well-researched and attractive products on the history of Willoughby. There is also scope for rationalising the available space at the museum to mount more effective exhibitions. Limited attention was given to **threats**, but ageing membership and the limited skills base were listed.

Developing this initial work into a business plan can assist us in obtaining the resources needed to progress further. We need to clarify our core objectives, define the strategies needed to achieve these and plan the specific activities required to implement these strategies. This will take some time as we need to involve our members.

It is suggested that the core purpose of the society is to:

*Encourage the study and appreciation of the history of Willoughby City by the community within the context of the key themes shaping Australia's history.*

From the 40 New South Wales historical themes, the Management Committee was asked to identify the four core themes they would like our museum to focus on, together with four secondary themes that should be covered from time to time. In order of priority, the results gave us the following core and secondary themes:

**Core Themes:** Industry and working in harsh conditions; Ethnic Influences & Migrants; Towns, Suburbs & Villages; and Domestic Life.

**Secondary Themes:** Persons & Community groups; Transport (moving people and goods); Education (formal and non-formal); Creative Endeavour; Leisure/Sport; Commerce; and Accommodation.

We hope to make further progress towards a strategic and business plan over the coming months. An important step in the process will be a **collection policy** that defines what we will (and will not) collect.

For the Members' Meeting on 7 June, we have scheduled a workshop at which the current status of the plan will be explained and your input will be sought on how we should bring this together. The activities will be conducted in an interactive and interesting manner.

Bob McKillop

## There is no Member's Meeting in April due

to Easter. Please see  
Coming Events on p. 4.

For members who have not yet renewed their membership for 2010, a renewal form will be enclosed with this newsletter.

**FROM OUR COLLECTION**

I showed two recent items from our collection at the General meeting on 1 February, a practice I plan to continue from time to time during the year. The items have a strong Willoughby provenance as described below.

The first is a flower pot, which initially offers little indication that it may have some special significance. When one looks at the base, however, the inscription is: 'DOULTONWARE AUSTRALIA DW-3'. This tells us that it is a product of the Australian works of the famous English pottery firm, Doulton and Company established by John Doulton at Lambeth in 1815. The Mashman Brothers business merged with Doulton & Company of London in 1957 and a new plant in Victoria Avenue was

officially opened in 1959. Following the retirement of Theo Mashman in June 1960, the business became a fully-owned subsidiary of Doultons, namely Doulton Sanitary Potteries (Australia) Pty Limited.

The pot in our collection was owned by a family in William Street, Roseville. It is believed to date from around 1980.

The second item is a high quality wax over plaster doll, still in its original box with arms detached. The professional doll repairer Barbara Hancock has identified it as a telephone doll of German manufacture of the early 1920s with a silk mohair wig. The self-made cloth dress of the doll was designed to be used as a cover for a telephone. This doll has been in the hands of the

Thom family since it was originally purchased and was recently donated to the museum's collection.

Paul Storm

**The Doultonware Australia flower pot (right); and the telephone doll in box (below).**



**MUSEUM UPDATE**

A 26 strong group of Friends of the Sydney Town Hall visited our museum on 19 February as part of a wider tour of Willoughby City. While their time with us was brief, some useful contacts were made and a guided tour of Sydney Town Hall is a possible activity for our members later in the year.

Our focus during February-March has been the preparation of posters on 'Notables who made Willoughby' for our contribution to the 2010 Heritage Festival during April. Volunteers have researched James Forsyth, the pioneer of our tanning industry, civic leader and historian Claude Leplastier, the noted potter George Day, Walter and Marion Griffin the interna-

tionally recognised architects who developed Castlecrag, the industrialist Sir Edward Hallstrom, and the founder of Buz Products, August Kraus.

With inputs from Mary and David Thom, Judy Baird, Paul Storm, Betty Doggett and Bob McKillop excellent posters have been prepared on these individuals for the exhibition.

Members are encouraged to come along to the museum and bring their friends to see these displays. We also need additional help with various tasks at the museum during the Festival. If you can assist, please phone us on 9410 3203.

To promote our museum, a new colour brochure has been prepared in the style of this newsletter. These will be available for distribution dur-

ing the 2010 Heritage Festival.

Members of the Management Committee made visits to the City of Canada Bay Museum at Concord in February and March. It is located in the old library building, which provides the luxury of ample space for both displays and storage. We are short of both at Willoughby, but there are interesting similarities in our industrial histories.

Their museum demonstrates a highly professional level of curatorship in their displays. Our challenge is to achieve this quality of 'telling our story' over the coming years.

Bob McKillop

**"Our challenge is to achieve this quality of 'telling the story' "**

**Below:** The sewing display at the City of Canada Bay Museum. The display cases allow items to be changed regularly. Bob McKillop photo.



## PRESENTATION ON THE CONCOURSE

Our guest speaker at the March Meeting was Eilis O'Beirne, Council's Manager for Special Events, to give a presentation on 'The Concourse' project.

Eilis provided a short overview of the history of the site, noting that it was used as a Council depot around the dawn of the 20th century and the first town hall was built on the site in 1907. This was demolished and replaced with the second town hall and Bailey Hall com-

plex, which opened in 1973. The Master Plan for the new Civic Place complex was developed in 2000 with extensive community consultation. Council has now decided to rename the complex *The Concourse* on advice from the performing arts community and to define its role as a community focal point.

With the aid of slides, Eilis then provided details of the key buildings within the complex, with particular focus on the

library that lies at its heart. It will be one of the largest and most up-to-date libraries in NSW and will serve as a key community place. The reference and local studies sections will have a lot of extra space well away from the areas to be used by school students, and will have its own dedicated information desk.

The presentation was well received and generated a

lively question and answer session. In response to a query on the impact of the new complex on water runoff into Scotts Creek, Eilis outlined the large grants that had been provided by the State and Federal Governments to install an Integrated Water Management System in the complex. This system retained some 83 mega litres of runoff water from recent rains, which is recycled to various uses in The Concourse and other Chatswood CBD buildings for cooling towers, irrigation of roof gardens, toilets, etc.

**Below:** The water feature and light well provide a major feature at the centre of the new library building in The Concourse complex. Image courtesy Willoughby City Council.



**“The new [Willoughby] library will be one of the largest and up-to-date ... in New South Wales.”**

## PROMOTING THE SOCIETY

Your management Committee has been active in building links with Council, other historical societies and community groups.

Paul Storm has been guest speaker at a number of groups, using items from our Australiana collection to promote our strength in this field. He was guest speaker at the Chatswood Rotary

Club meeting and dinner on 24 February, renewing the past association between our groups. He made similar presentations to the Hills District and Penrith historical societies on 15 and 16 March. Four members of the committee Luncheon of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia in the city on 3 March.

As reported in the 'Museum Update', we have forged a strong link with the Concord Heritage Society (managers of the Canada Bay museum). Regular contact has also been maintained with Ken Smith, Secretary of the Parramatta & District Historical Society and one of our reviewers under the M&G Standards Program. Ken

has invited us to visit *Hambleton Cottage* museum to assess the management systems they use there.

Chris Lattimore represented to WDHS at the 'River People' Reunion at Fullers Bridge on 27 February. They have brought together a lot of historical material on the settlement there.

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### Willoughby Museum

Our museum is located at *Boronia*, 58 Johnson Street, Chatswood.

Opening hours: 1.30-4pm on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month; 10am-4pm on the 2nd and 4th Thursday.

**Patron:** Pat Reilly, Mayor of Willoughby

#### Management Committee:

President: Paul Storm (9419 7354; or )

Vice-President: Mary Thom

Secretary: Chris Lattimore

Treasurer: Judith Baird

Museum Manager: Bob McKillop

Speakers' Coordinator: Betty Doggett

Maintenance Coordinator: Harry Fox

Other Committee Members:

Joan Antarakis

David Lendrum

## YOUR COMMUNITY MUSEUM

### COMING EVENTS

#### Members' Meetings

At the Craft Room, Dougherty Centre on the first Monday of the month. Forthcoming speakers are:

**5 April:** Easter Monday—No meeting.

**3 May:** Raymond Howes, a violin maker, will talk on the history of violins and their manufacture.

**7 June:** Bob McKillop will lead a members' workshop, 'Opportunities and Challenges for the Future' which will form part of our strategic planning activities. It is an opportunity for you to help guide out future path.

#### Tours

Our low-cost tours to interesting sites and experiences around Sydney will usually be on the first Thursday of every second month. Book-

ings for these to be made with Paul or Robin at 9419 7354.

**8 April:** Visit to Cockatoo Island to its naval heritage. Meet at Wharf 5 Circular Quay at 10.35 am to catch the 10.50 ferry. There is a café on the Island. Return on 2.55 pm ferry. Pay for our own fares and meals.

3 June: Guided tour of Central Railway Station led by Bob McKillop, the lead author of the book documenting the history of the station for its Centenary. Meet 'Under the Clock' on the main concourse at 11.30am. **NOTE:** Please book with Bob or Kerry and 9958 4516 for this tour.

#### Special Events

**Notables who Shaped Willoughby.** Our contribution to the National Trust Heritage

Festival with displays featuring local people and ideas who helped to shape the nation. At the museum on 11, 15, 18 and 23 April. Please contact Bob or Chris if you can help as a volunteer at the museum on any of these dates.

**11 April:** Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery guided tour at 11am. The tour will take visitors past the graves of leading citizens and provide a brief history of their achievements. Cost \$25, bookings essential (to John May at 9906 5106).

**21 April:** *Australiana in the Applied Arts*, a talk and hand-on display by Paul Storm at the Willoughby City Council chambers, Level 6, 31 Victor Street, Chatswood at 6pm. Free, but bookings essential at 9777 7976.



We needed a portrait of James Forsyth, the pioneer of the Willoughby tanning industry, for our 'Notables' display. Betty Doggett contacted David Forysth while he was in the United Kingdom and he kindly sent us this great image.